

# Counting the homeless

Each person worth \$2,871 in biennial census for HUD

BY JONATHAN NEWMAN

THE Department of Housing and Urban Development last year gave San Francisco city agencies and private nonprofits \$18.7 million to assist the homeless. The city got about that much from HUD in 2009, too, based on the results of a biennial census of unsheltered homeless.

The \$18.7 million was based, in large part, on the 6,514 homeless counted in 2009 — roughly \$2,871 per person — though it's but a fraction of the total spent on services for the homeless each year.

In 2009, 1,167 homeless were counted in District 6, by far the largest concentration of homeless among the 11 supervisorial districts. District 10 was next largest with 444. District 11, which is farthest from downtown and borders Daly City, had the fewest homeless — 43.

This year's count took place Jan. 27 as more than 300 volunteers fanned out from four dispatch centers — Downtown (composed entirely of

District 6 plus Chinatown) Mission, Bayview and Sunset — combing 150 assigned routes throughout the city to note the homeless on sidewalks and alleyways, in Muni and BART stations, fast food joints, encampments and under freeway overpasses.

City workers counted the homeless in shelters.

Parks and freeway onramps were handled by the police and California Highway Patrol.

Nearly 20% of the routes — 29 — were in District 6. Of these, 16 were in the Tenderloin, the only city neighborhood to be blanketed by counters.

Longtime friends Bobbi Rosenthal and Rick Shelton are experienced volunteers. They've teamed together in past homeless counts. Tonight, Bobbi will drive; Rick will ride shotgun as spotter.

At 7 p.m. they join about 160 other volunteers, plus police, Rec and Park workers and Human Services Agency staff in Room 300, the Public Health Commission hearing room, at 101 Grove St., for a one-hour training and review of ground rules before beginning the census.

Ali Schlageter of the city's Homeless Coordinating Board lays it out: "Rule No.1: Don't be intrusive. Volunteers are to observe." She lightens the notably serious mood in the room with a joking reference to her failed effort to rename the night's count — "The World Champion Giants Count of the Homeless." Cory, but it cuts the ice.

Schlageter explains that trained survey workers, consisting of current and former homeless, will follow up tonight's census with one-on-one contact with the homeless to develop detailed information that will help city agencies craft specific services.

She reviews the categories on the tally sheet each team of volunteers carries to document the county,

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# CENTRAL CITY



SAN FRANCISCO

## TENDERLOIN



PHOTO BY LENNY LIMJOCO

At express computers, patrons search for materials at the Main Library, the Tenderloin's online lifeline for residents without computers or Internet access.

# INTERNET LIMBO

Computer trainings and Internet access growing in Tenderloin

BY MARJORIE BEGGS

AN antenna sticking out of his backpack, Robert Damphousse spent six hours walking the streets of the Tenderloin collecting information for "The Wireless Landscape," his project for the Wonderland extravaganza.

In his backpack was a laptop loaded

with Kismet Wireless Network Sniffer, software that can detect wireless network traffic in the air — the radio waves carrying emails and all manner of Internet data back and forth from computers, smart phones, tablets and other digital devices.

Damphousse downloaded the sniffer's findings, and, using a GPS, created a neighborhood map with a dot for each network.

"Wi-fi is in the air around you, right now," he said, "but it's invisible. I show these maps to the public to help demystify some of the magic that is wi-fi."

In the 30 blocks he surveyed in 2009 — Larkin to Mason, Geary to McAllister — he found 1,200 unique networks and 3,000 access points that pull in information from the Internet and send it to computers. He says he might have missed 10% of the access points because they can't broadcast their signals as far as the street.

Those numbers don't translate into how many people are sitting in Tenderloin SROs, apartments, offices or hotel rooms with laptops connected wirelessly to the Internet, but, he says, they are typical for an inner-city area this size and suggest that the TL is not a digital desert.

Damphousse's survey helps define the extent of wireless activity in the Tenderloin. It may be typical, but numbers of computer owners with access to high-speed Internet suggest that the digital divide does persist in the neighborhood. For that information, the controller's office has the only game in town.

The controller's City Survey, biennial since 1996, asks a random sample of residents to answer a few demographic questions and to rate city services (streets, sidewalks, parks, transportation, libraries, safety)

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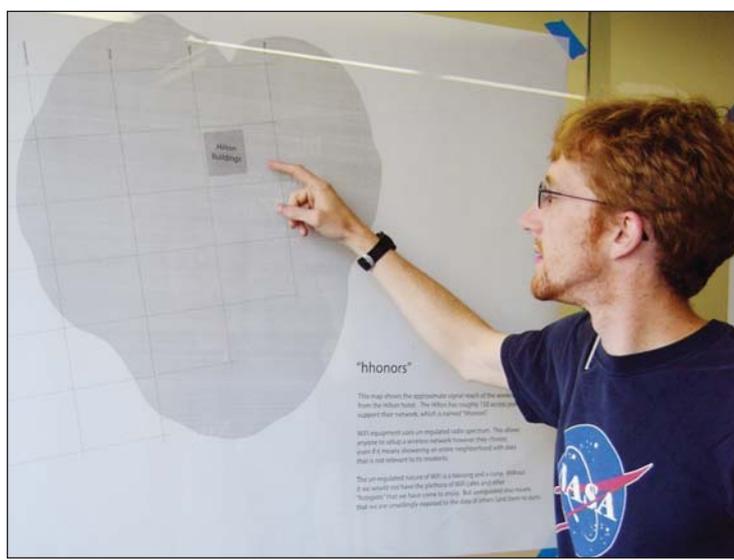


PHOTO BY MARJORIE BEGGS

Robert Damphousse traces the reach of the Hilton Hotel's network signal.